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REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT AT BILL SIGNING CEREMONY AT HEADQUARTERS BUILDING

Attached are remarks of President Ronald Reagan at the signing ceremony of the Intelligence Identities Protection Act on 23 June 1982 at Headquarters Building.

Attachment

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

June 23, 1982

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT BILL SIGNING CEREMONY
AT CIA HEADQUARTERS

Langley, Virginia

11:32 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. No, please. Thank you. Director Bill and members of the Congress, distinguished guests who are here and you, ladies and gentlemen, all distinguished, I bring you greetings from a former Director of this Agency, Vice President George Bush, who couldn't be here with us this morning. (Applause). And I want to give him credit because I'm going to tell a story of his. And it's always dangerous telling a trade joke to members of the trade because the chances are too good that they've heard it. But I'm going to take the chance anyway. It's one of the few stories that I can tell now since ethnic jokes are a no-no. This one is an Irish joke and my name is Reagan, so I can tell the story. (Laughter).

But it has to do something with the occasion and with your line of work. And the story is that there was an agent overseas and happened to be in Ireland and there was an emergency and it was necessary to contact him immediately. So they called in another agent and they said, "Now, you'll go there. His name is Murphy and your recognition will be to say, 'Tis a fair day but it'll be lovelier this evening.'"

So he went to Ireland and -- a little town in Ireland, into the pub, elbowed himself up to the bar, ordered a drink and then said to the bartender, "How would I get in touch with Murphy?"

And the bartender says, "Well, if it's Murphy the farmer you want, it's two miles down the road and it's the farm on the left." He said, "If it's Murphy the bootmaker, he's on the second floor of the building across the street. And," he says, "my name is Murphy."

So he picked up the drink and he said, "Well, 'tis a fair day, but it'll be lovelier this evening."

"Oh," he said, "it's Murphy the spy you want. Well, he's -- " (Laughter). (Applause).

When President Dwight Eisenhower came here almost 23 years ago to dedicate the cornerstone of this building here, he spoke of heroes. "Heroes," he said, "who are undecorated and unsung, whose only reward was the knowledge that their service to their country was unique and indispensable."

(Airplane passing overhead.)

We've got to do something about that airport. (Laughter).
(Applause).

Well, today, I speak again of those heroes, the men and women who are locked in a dangerous, sometimes deadly, conflict with the forces of totalitarianism, the men and women whose best accomplishments, whose greatest deeds can never be known to their countrymen but only to a few of their superiors and ultimately only to history. These men and women, these heroes of a grim twilight struggle are those of you who serve here in the Central Intelligence Agency. Whether you work in Langley or a far away nation, whether your tasks are in operations or analysis sections, it is upon your intellect and integrity, your wit and intuition that the fate of freedom rests for millions of your countrymen and for many millions more all around the globe. You are the trip-wire across which the forces of repression and tyranny must stumble in their quest for global domination. You, the men and women of the CIA, are the eyes and ears of the free world. Like those who are part of any silent service, your sacrifices are sometimes unappreciated, your work is sometimes misunderstood. Because you are professionals, you understand and accept this. But because you are human and because you deal daily in the dangers that confront this nation, you must sometimes question whether some of your countrymen appreciate the value of your accomplishments, the sacrifices you make, the dangers you confront, the importance of the warnings that you issue.

And that is why I have come here today, first, to sign an important piece of legislation that bears directly on your work, an act of Congress whose overwhelming passage by the representatives of the American people is a symbol of their support for the job that you do everyday. But even more than this, I have come here today to say to you what the vast majority of Americans would say if they had this opportunity to stand here before you. We are grateful to you. We thank you. We are proud of you.

The bill I am about to sign is one that has received from both Houses of Congress the most careful attention and serious debate. And I would be remiss if I did not cite for the public record the names of those who were instrumental in its passage. This effort actually began several years ago.

In the 97th Congress, the Chairman of the Senate and House Committees on Intelligence, Senator Barry Goldwater and Representative Edward Boland, worked diligently for its passage. So too did many members of the House and Senate, Republicans and Democrats alike, some of whom are here with us today. I especially want to state my deepest admiration for Senator John Chafee whose outstanding leadership guided this bill through the Senate. (Applause.) And as always, Howard Baker must be thanked for his leadership which I have come to admire very much. And finally, I only wish that the late Representative John Ashbrook who took the lead on the House floor could be with us here to witness this signing. The Intelligence Identities Protection Act is his legislative monument.

As I have said, the enactment of the Intelligence Identities Protection Act is clear evidence of the value this nation places on its intelligence agencies and their personnel. It is a vote of confidence in you by the American people through their elected representatives. It's also a tribute to the strength of our democracy. The Congress has carefully drafted this bill so that it focuses only on those who would transgress the bounds of decency -- not those who would exercise their legitimate right of dissent. This carefully drawn Act recognizes that the revelation of the names of secret agents adds nothing to legitimate public debate over intelligence policy. It is also a signal to the world that while we and this democratic nation remain tolerant and flexible, we also retain our good sense and our resolve to protect our own security and that of the brave men and women who serve us in difficult and dangerous intelligence assignments. (Applause.)

During the debate over this bill, some have suggested that our focus should be not on protecting our own intelligence agencies, but on the real or imagined abuses of the past. I'm glad that counsel was rejected for the days of such abuses are behind us.

The Congress now shares the responsibility of guarding against any transgression and I have named a new Intelligence Oversight Board and Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board to assist me in ensuring that the rule of law is maintained in areas which must remain secret and out of the normal realm of public scrutiny.

Beyond this, I have full confidence that you will do your job vigorously and imaginatively while making sure that your activity is lawful, constitutional, and in keeping with the traditions of our way of life. And while you're at your job and while I'm President, and while these Congressmen stand at watch, we'll work together to see to it that this powerful tool of government is used to advance, not abuse the rights of free people. (Applause.)

Today, after nearly a decade of neglect and sometimes over zealous criticism, our intelligence agencies are being rebuilt. This is altogether in keeping with the American tradition. Such activities have been crucial to our survival as a nation. The sacrifice of Nathan Hale whose statue stands near here is a national legend. And in our own time, the valiant performance of our intelligence agencies at crucial battles like Midway and Normandy is a matter of historical record.

It is out of this valiant service during World War II that your agency was born. As some of you perhaps know, it was in 1943 that General Bill Donovan decided to penetrate the Third Reich with secret agents. He did so against the advice of our more experienced allies who said it was an impossible task. It was only 35 years later that the story of those efforts were fully brought to light in a book called, "The Piercing of the Reich," by Joseph Persico. I thought you'd be interested to know that the young

New York lawyer who was given the job of penetrating Nazi Germany was described in this book as a man with boundless energy and competence, a man with an analytical mind, tenacious will, and a capacity to generate high morale among his staff. He delegated authority easily to trusted subordinates and set a simple standard: results.

As some of you know by now the name of that young lawyer who performed the impossible task of putting 103 missions into Germany is William Casey and he is now your DCI. (Applause.)

He is a close friend to whom I owe a great personal debt, and I know that that debt grows greater every day with the job that you and he are doing together.

I am familiar with the important changes that have been made in CIA analysis and operations under Bill's leadership, and I know that together you are writing another important and inspiring chapter in the history of those who have worked in America's intelligence agencies. We will need this kind of excellence from you, for the challenges in the months and years ahead will be great ones. As some of you may know, I have spoken recently about the fading appeal of totalitarianism and about the internal decay of the Soviet experiment. And some have asked in response why I place such an emphasis on the strength of our military and intelligence agencies if indeed it is our adversaries who are approaching the point of exhaustion. Well, the answer to that is not difficult. History shows that it is precisely when totalitarian regimes begin to decay from within -- it is precisely when they feel the first real stirrings of domestic unrest -- that they seek to reassure their own people of their vast and unchallengeable power through imperialistic expansion or foreign adventure. So the era ahead of us is one that will see grave challenges and be fraught with danger, yet it is one that I firmly believe will end in the triumph of the civilized world and the supremacy of its beliefs in individual liberty, representative government, and the rule of law under God. (Applause.)

And that is why we must now summon all the nations of the world to a crusade for freedom and a global campaign for the rights of the individual, and you are in the forefront of this campaign. You must be the cutting edge of freedom in peace and war and in the shadowy world in between you must serve in silence and carry your special burden. But let me assure you, you are on the winning side and your service is one for which free men will thank you and future generations honor you.

It is with special pride, then, that I now sign this piece of legislation into law. Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)

(The President signs the bill.)

It is law. (Applause.)

END

11:46 A.M. EDT